(b) if so, the details thereof;

(c) whether the number of children employed in such industries has come down since then;

(d) if so, the facts thereof; and

(e) the steps taken or proposed to be taken to remove child labour atleast from hazardous industries?

THE MINISTER OF LABOUR (SHRI M. ARUNACHALAM) : (a) to (e). According to 1981 census, the total child labour population in India was 13.06 million. This figure rose to 17.02 million on the basis of the 43rd round of National Sample Survey conducted in 1987-88. The bulk of child labour is engaged in agriculture, and allied employments including household occupations. Out of the total child labour population, around 2.00 million children are estimated to be employed in hazardous occupations and processes. There is no data available to indicate that the incidence of child labour in hazardous occupations has come down.

Government has taken several steps to tackle the problem of child labour. According to the National Child Labour Policy, 1987 the problem of child labour is being tackled through (i) legislation; (ii) general development programmes for the benefit of children; and (iii) implementation of the National Child Labour Projects.

A comprehensive law, namely, the Child Labour (Prohibition & Regulation) Act, 1986 already exists to prohibit the employment of children in 7 occupations and 18 processes. In addition, for safeguarding the interests of children, thee are protective provisions in various other labour laws such as the Factories Act, 1948, the Mines Act, 1952 and Motor Transport (Workers) Act 1961 etc. The approach of the government is to implement all the child related provision of these laws in a harmonious fashion.

Government is presently engaged in the task of rehabilitation of about 2.00 million working children in hazaradous occupations by the year 2002. So far 76 child labour projects have been sanctioned to cover over 1.5 lakh children through special schools where they are provided non-formal education, vocational training, supplementary nutrition, health care and stipend etc. Apart from this, a massive awareness generation campaign has also been launched against the evil of child labour at national, regional and district levels. Funds for district levels awareness generation have been released to 133 most child labour endemic districts in this country to sensitize people against the practice of child labour. These measures will be consolidated and expanded in the coming years.

Consumer Courts and Redressal Forum

*316. SHRI SANAT KUMAR MANDAL : Will the Minister of CIVIL SUPPLIES, CONSUMER AFFAIRS AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION be pleased to state :

(a) whether any assessment has been made by the Union Government at any stage into the effectiveness and working of the Consumer Courts as the redressal forums for consumers grievances all over the country;

(b) if so, the outcome thereof; and

(c) if not, the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF FOOD AND MINISTER OF CIVIL SUPPLIES, CONSUMER AFFAIRS AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION (SHRI DEVENDRA PRASAD YADAV) : (a) to (c). The monitoring/assessment of the functioning of the Consumer Courts is an on going process. According to the provisions of the Consumer Protection Act, 1986, the administrative control of the Consumer Courts lies with the respective State Governments/UT Administrations.

The Central Government also monitors the functioning of the Consumer Courts in the States and UTs from time to time. The Central Government had sponsored a sample survey on the "Evaluation of the Effectiveness of the Implementation of the Consumer Protection Act, 1986" in five States, namely, Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Andhra Pradesh, West Bengal and Maharashtra, conducted by the Indian Institute of Public Administration, New Delhi. The summary Report of the Survey submitted in December, 1994 made, inter-alia, certain suggestions for improving the functioning of Consumer Courts, Consumer education and awareness. Some of the recommendations included the provision of infrastructure facilities as well as uniform staffing pattern in the Consumer Courts, authorisation of the Presidents of the District Fora as Drawing & Disbursing Authority and bringing the expenditure of the consumer courts under Plan grant etc. Since these recommendations pertained to the administration and management of consumer courts, the Report was sent to the States and UTs for taking appropriate action.

With a view to enabling the States/UT Governments to strengthen the Consumer courts and also to reduce the pendency of cases in these courts, the Central Government has commenced a central scheme of one time grant to States/UTs under which Rs.61 crores will be made available during 1995-96 and 1996-97. A sum of Rs.29.98 crores has been released during 1995-96 and the release of the balance amount will depend on the extent of reduction in the pendency of cases in the consumer courts.

Over-Billing of Telephones

*317. SHRIMATI VASUNDHARA RAJE :
SHRI AMAR ROY PRADHAN :

Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS be pleased to state :

(a) whether the complaints of over-billing of STD/ISD/PCOs have come to the notice of the Government during 1995 and 1996 (till date);